

ARTICLE APPEARED
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5 July 1983**JACK ANDERSON****Snubbed by U.S.,
Rebel Leader
Calls It Quits**

This is the story behind the story of Commander Zero's cease-fire in the guerrilla war against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Unfortunately, it's the story of a colossal failure by the Reagan administration to seize a golden opportunity.

Commander Zero is the *nom de guerre* of Eden Pastora, the hero of the 1979 revolution that overthrew Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza. Appalled by the communist takeover of the Sandinista regime he helped put in power, Pastora went into exile and gathered other disenchanted Sandinistas for a new revolution.

When CIA-backed exiles, including many former Somoza national guardsmen, launched their counter-revolution from Honduras in the north, Pastora struck from Costa Rica in the south. His 2,000 guerrillas became the most effective anti-Sandinista force.

But the Reagan administration, in its infinite wisdom, turned its back on Pastora, preferring instead the "contras" in the north with their right-wing credentials. Pastora asked

Washington for money to buy arms and food for his guerrillas, but he insisted that there be no strings attached. The administration said no.

I sent my associate Jon Lee Anderson to march with Pastora inside Nicaragua. In fact, Anderson was standing by Pastora's side when the rebel commander told his troops that he had to call off the war because they were broke.

Pastora made his announcement to about 100 guerrillas in his camp on the San Juan River in southern Nicaragua. The message was relayed by radio to units fighting deeper within the country.

"There's no money left to keep fighting," Pastora told his men. "This is the difficult and harsh reality. You must make up your minds what to do—to go back to your assigned combat zones and subsist in the bush or not.

"You must go on with what you have. We can't promise you any more. If we can, we'll return to you with the boots, the medicines and the bullets you need.

"If we can't, we'll bring you only our hope, our concerns and our brotherly love—and we'll come to die with you."

When he finished his speech, Pastora and his men shouted the old Sandinista battle cry: "Free homeland or death!"

Pastora did not try to hide his bitterness at what he considered the

Reagan administration's deliberate betrayal.

"The CIA wants us around," he told my associate. "They want us fighting. But they don't want us to get big enough to be a threat to their puppets." He was referring to the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) fighting in the north.

"They have been trying to get us to join the FDN, something we will never do, because its commanders are still ex-officers in Somoza's national guard," said Pastora. 47.

The administration's refusal to provide funds for Pastora's operation was something he could tolerate. They had been getting money from private donors, including several U.S. corporations, and from some governments in Europe and Latin America.

But what infuriates Pastora is what he claims is the CIA's deliberate sabotage of their fund-raising efforts.

"The CIA has told potential supporters of ours to lay off," Pastora complained. "They want us alive only to legitimize their puppet FDN force in the north."

Pastora said he had less than \$400 left when he announced his temporary cease-fire on June 23. Yet it was the very success of his anti-Sandinista movement that drove it into bankruptcy, by bringing in more recruits than he could arm, clothe or even feed.